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Correspondence.

WHAT EVERY CHRISTIAN OUGHT TO KNOW AND DO.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE CATHOLIC LAYMAN.

SIR.—I sent a few days ago to each of two Roman Catholic friends of mine (laymen) a suggestion relative to the Roman Catholic tract on morals, which has long had so enormous a circulation under the sanction of Archbishop Cullen.

In the last edition of it some of the most objectionable parts are omitted, and I expressed my satisfaction that they had been; but I remonstrated against the *silence* with which this change has been made, which leaves many thousands and tens of thousands, who have been purchasers of the former editions, ignorant that any material change has been made, and, consequently, exposed to the noxious effects of the doctrine which has been set before them by authority. No retraction has been made or warning supplied to guard them against the very lax morality they have been taught. And I suggested that if several candid and intelligent and pure-minded Roman Catholics would come forward to remonstrate they might bring about a remedy for the evil.

I remarked that I am not a person to delight in exposing and exulting over the faults of those of another Church, but that I would rather see them remove for themselves a stain and a scandal to that Church.

As things stand, I remarked, one of the Mussulmen mutineers in India, if he held in his hand the former editions of that tract, might urge, not unreasonably, "If this is Christianity, Christians ought to be hunted down like noxious wild beasts, and every effort made to substitute for their immoral system the purer doctrines of the Koran."

One of the persons I addressed, a gentleman whom I have long known as himself of unblemished integrity, expressed his strong disapprobation of the tract, but lamented the inability he felt to interfere with any prospect of success.

The other sent me a *vindication* of the tract, and has allowed me to offer it to you for publication.

I feel confident you will give it a place in the CATHOLIC LAYMAN, on the principle you have always acted on, of hearing both sides. Strictures on that tract have appeared in your columns, and it is but fair that you should put before your readers the defence of it, together with any remarks thereon which you may think fit to subjoin.

I remain, &c.,

D.

The following is the enclosed vindication:—

I had seen before the tract which you enclosed, and had discussed portions of it both with Protestants and with Catholics. In conversation with the latter, I have freely expressed my opinion that certain passages in the first edition were likely to do harm among the class of persons for whom the tract was intended. I did not, however, say (for I did not feel competent to judge) that the casuistry contained in these passages was erroneous, or *per se* objectionable—that was a matter I left to casuists; but I *did* say, and strongly feel, that such passages were, at any rate, likely to be misunderstood; and that considerations which might be most useful for the guidance of confessors, might be most unfit to be brought prominently under the notice of penitents. I have reason to believe that it was on some such view as this that the alterations and omissions in the second edition, which you have referred to, were made—not, be it observed, because they were *erroneous*, but because it was feared they might be misunderstood. If this were so, surely there would be no ground for attributing underhand or disingenuous conduct to those concerned in withdrawing these passages. It was done, you say, "silently" and "secretly;" but if you turn to the title-page of the second edition, you will find that there is little attempt at concealment after all. The words, "A new edition, revised," appear on that title-page. Revision certainly implies either alteration or omission, or both. The title-page, therefore, announces exactly what has been done. But you appear to think that the alterations ought to have been announced and explained in a preface. If they consisted in the correction of "admitted errors," they certainly ought; but if they were made for the reasons I have supposed, there was no such necessity. The author does not prefix any preface or notice of any kind to either edition; he seems to have wished to keep his own personality entirely in the background.

Here I might stop; but the real point at issue still remains behind. Protestants say that there are certain directions and distinctions in this tract, which are plainly immoral and revolting to the natural conscience. Well, then, I will come at once to the passage at page 27, which is, perhaps, the most questionable in the tract, and has been omitted in the second edition. That its omission was right I have no doubt, and I rejoice at it, because the tract was likely to fall into the hands of many persons placed in the precise circumstances of temptation alluded to; who, if disposed to be dishonest, might plausibly shelter themselves under the words of this passage. But that the doctrine laid down might not be useful to confessors, or that it is immoral in itself, is by no means clear. The passage runs, "It is a sin to mix something with what you sell; e.g., water with any liquor, except there is a

common custom of doing it, and it is necessary in order to gain a reasonable profit." Those who object to this passage would maintain, I suppose, that to "mix something with what you sell" is always a sin. If so, it is a sin which is terribly common, and which the English trading community seems to be more deeply infected with (to judge from the disclosures of the Adulteration Committee of the House of Commons) than the same class in any other nation in the world. If, therefore, Protestantism holds a high doctrine in the matter, it seems that it cannot prevent a low practice. Now, let us suppose a Catholic dealer in milk in London to be surrounded by Protestant dealers, and to find (as he certainly might find) that, owing to excessive competition and the consequent low scale of profits, all his fellow-dealers found or fancied themselves compelled to add water to their milk, in order to secure a "reasonable profit." The Catholic dealer feels the difficulty, and consults his confessor on the subject. If his confessor takes the rigid view, he will tell him that he cannot add water to his milk without being guilty of sin. In which case one of two things will happen—either the man, though believing the practice to be sinful, will yet give in to it for the sake of a livelihood (in which case his heart and conscience would become hardened and depraved), or he will give up that line of life altogether, and bring ruin on himself and his family. Is it so very clear that the confessor would be right? On the other hand, suppose him to say this, "If it is, indeed, the common custom of the trade, and if without resorting to it you could not gain a reasonable profit" (i.e., of course, a profit enabling a man not to get rich, but to maintain himself and those dependant on him); "if you tell no lie about it, but should you be taxed with doing so, admit it; and if, finally, you give up the practice the moment you see the possibility of making a fair profit without it, you will commit no sin by conforming to the general custom of the trade." Is it so very clear that in speaking thus the confessor would be wrong? But it will be said all this is *casuistry*. Of course it is; and is all casuistry useless or pernicious? It has not been always thought so in the Church of England; for Jeremy Taylor wrote a long manual of casuistry—the Ductor dubitantium.

The innumerable questions that lie in the debateable border land of morals cannot, I fancy, be satisfactorily settled in the off-hand way which those who do not look into the real condition and circumstances of each case imagine possible.

I have entered at length into this one case, because I wished to show, not that the casuistry applied to it at page 27 is right—for that is a point on which I am not called upon to decide—but that it was perfectly possible that those who withdrew this passage (together with others to which analogous reasoning may be applied) did so from some motive of prudence or expediency; not because they thought them *erroneous*. If so, they have not acted dishonestly in prefixing to the second edition no explanation respecting the omissions. Whence it follows that individual Catholic laymen are not bound to remonstrate against the non-appearance of such explanation, especially if they have good reason to know, as I have, that the actual motive which led to the omissions was such an one as I have supposed.

I wish to say, in conclusion, that even in the second edition there are one or two directions which I should like to see withdrawn; not, as I said before, because I think them indefensible in themselves, or out of place in a manual for confessors, but because they seem to me likely to be misapplied by those for whom the tract is intended.

[We beg to offer our best acknowledgments to the correspondent to whom we are indebted for the above communication, and who has, at the same time, enclosed us underlined copies of both editions of "What every Christian must know and do." We have been thus led to compare carefully the two editions, and thinking the results of the comparison may interest some of our readers, we devote a separate article to the subject. (See *Supra*, p. 49.) We, therefore, think it necessary here only to reply briefly to the defence of that tract now sent us for publication.]

The writer endeavours to defend the doctrine of Roman Catholic moralists by a counter attack upon Protestant practice. He tells us that if Liguori and Father Furniss teach that it is lawful for a trader to adulterate the articles in which he deals, there are at least many Protestants who do the thing, whether their religious guides think it lawful or not; and he gives us to understand that there is no use in our teaching high doctrine, if it does not prevent a low practice.

We must own that it is a lamentable fact that, on the whole, the lives of Christians are much below their theory. But this is unfortunately true of every denomination of Christians, and Roman Catholics are certainly no exceptions to this rule. Though Liguori does not prescribe a very high standard of morality, his standard is very far above that which they generally attain to. It is to the advantage of Roman Catholics that we should judge of their morality, rather by the teaching, even of Liguori, than by the practice of those among them who ought to have been patterns of virtue—than if, for example, we were to judge of their purity by the life of Pope Alexander VI., or of their notions of conjugal fidelity by the practice of princes so zealous for their religion as

Louis XIV. or James II. Well, then, if men's practice is sure to fall below their theory, this is a reason, not for lowering the standard of our moral teaching, but for keeping it high. The rules of morality must not be relaxed because of the shortcomings of individuals. The very way to improve men's practice is to try to get them to aim at some higher standard than any they have yet come up to. We may venture to hope for a man's recovery from sin as long as his conscience tells him that what he has been doing is wrong, since he may thereby be led to struggle against the vices that have hitherto overcome him. But if his religious guides, instead of striving to raise his practice to the level of Christian morality, depress their rules of morality to the level of his practice; if they give him the agreeable information that the things which he has feared were sins are really innocent, and may be indulged in with safety, who can then expect that he should strive against sins which he is told he need not forsake. Nay, as men's practice is almost always worse than their theory, the chances are that he will soon sink still lower than before, and that his code of morals will soon require some additional relaxation.

We wonder it did not strike this apologist for Father Furniss how humiliating it was to his Church to represent the standard of the moral teaching of Roman Catholic divines as regulated by the practice of the worst sort of Protestants. But we have, at all events, shown that no such Protestant errors in practice can justify any relaxation of the rules of morality. The condition is bad of the man who does what his conscience condemns; but still worse of him who has brought his conscience to palliate or approve the sins which he finds it inconvenient to forsake. The man is to be condemned who does not profit by the light which he enjoys; but if the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness.]

THE RULE OF CATHOLIC FAITH—WHAT IS IT?

TO THE EDITOR OF THE CATHOLIC LAYMAN.

SIR,—Having explained some of the points of what I called *negative Romanism*—that is to say, what a man may not believe, and still be orthodox—I will now say a few words on what, according to Veron, only is of faith. I will dare venture to assert that if the peculiar doctrines of the Romish Church, against which we Protestants protest, be brought to the test of Veron's rules, or definitions, they, one and all, will be untenable; and if we are to take his rules as tests of orthodoxy, the most rigid Protestant may be the most orthodox Romanist.

To ascertain what is to be believed as of Catholic faith, Veron lays down the following rules, which I will number for convenience:—

1. "That, and that only, is an article of Catholic faith which has been revealed in the word of God, and proposed by the Catholic Church to all her children, as necessary to be believed with divine faith"—Cap. I, § 1, p. 1.—"Rule of Catholic Faith," Edit. Birmingham, 1833.

This rule, he says, "comprises two parts." The one "revealed in the Word of God," the other "proposed by the Catholic Church."

"A doctrine invested with these two conditions must be believed with divine and Catholic faith. But it no longer belongs to this heavenly deposit if either of these conditions fail—namely, if it be not revealed [in Scripture], or has not been propounded by the Church."—Sec. 2, p. 3.

In the abstract, therefore, no Protestant need shrink from this text; for, unless the doctrine proposed by the Church is revealed in the Scriptures, he need not subscribe it. It is true Veron says that—

"The second condition pre-supposes the first; for as Christ promised His Church the assistance of His Holy Spirit to teach her, and lead her into all truth, it is impossible—unless (as they cannot) these promises fail—that this heavenly guided Church can ever propose anything as revealed which has really not been so."

We quite understand the drift of his subtleties; but still the rule may be subscribed, even with this addition, since it is nowhere revealed in Scripture that the Church of Rome is the Church of Christ; nor is it revealed that the Holy Spirit is promised peculiarly and specially to the Roman Church. But to relieve us from a great difficulty, Veron takes great credit for his Church in making the following admission:—

"We are free to declare that God is the first and supreme Judge, and that Scripture also is a judge of controversies, and a judge, too, of greater authority than the Church, since the Scripture contains the Word of God, whilst the Church only speaks by the mouth of man."—Cap. ii, § xvi. 3, p. 145.

A most safe and wise admission.

That the Church of Rome cannot err, or, in other words, is "infallible," is not a question of expressed or implied revelation. This is a question of FACT. Messrs. Kirk and Berrington, in their "Faith of Catholics," distinctly assert that "it is no article of faith that the Church [of Rome] cannot err in MATTERS OF FACT."—(pp. 154-5, edit. 1813.)

The Church of Rome may err, therefore, in alleging as a fact her own infallency. What, then, becomes of "Infallibility?"

Here again Veron comes to the rescue:—

"As the council [of Trent], though speaking of the authority of the Church, and of the universal Church too [making a distinction between the local Roman Church and the universal Church of Christ], on questions of faith and morals abstains from using the word 'Infallibility,' every Catholic is at liberty to